



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Laramie Region Angler Newsletter

2020

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Fish Management in the Laramie Region

Welcome to the 2020 Laramie Region Angler Newsletter! We had another great year managing the diverse aquatic resources that Southeast Wyoming supports. This letter highlights some events from 2019 and what to expect in 2020. The Laramie Region provides many angling opportunities, from trout in alpine waters to crappie in prairie waters—make sure to get out this year to fish a new water or catch a new species. As always, please feel free to contact us with any comments or questions about the aquatic resources in Southeast Wyoming. Your input is important to us as we manage these resources for you, the people of Wyoming. You'll find all of our contact info on the last page of this newsletter. Thanks for a great 2019 and happy fishing in 2020!

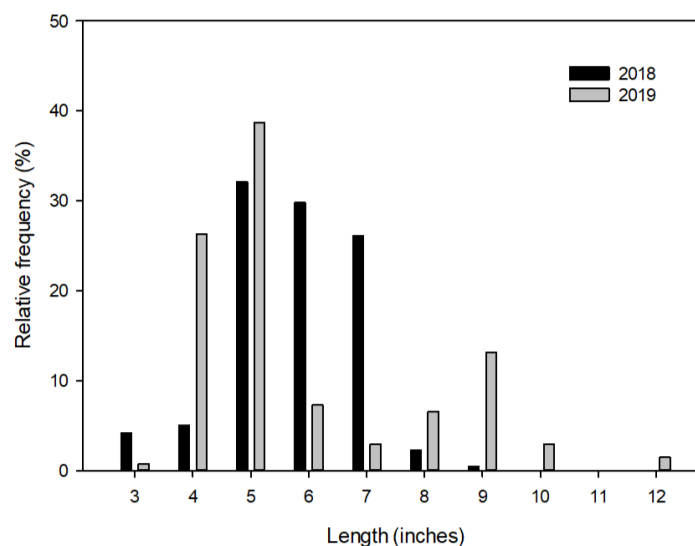


Laramie Region Aquatics Team

Check out Bump Sullivan Reservoir for Crappie



Bump Sullivan Reservoir is a 440 surface acre shallow reservoir located within the Springer/Bump Sullivan Wildlife Habitat Management Area near Torrington. Prior to the drought from 2000-2010, Bump Sullivan Reservoir produced Black Crappie in excess of 15 inches. The reservoir was refilled and restocked in 2010. Since 2010, the Game and Fish Department has invested money and time into repairing water delivery ditches, leasing water, improving in-lake habitat, and improving the fishery. For example, Black Crappie, Channel Catfish, and Largemouth Bass have all been stocked since 2014. Channel Catfish have been stocked annually since 2016. Transplants of adult Black Crappie from Keyhole Reservoir and Hawk Springs Reservoir were completed in 2016 and 2017. In addition, over 13,000 Black Crappie were stocked in 2017, 29,000 in 2018, and 20,000 in 2019. In 2020, in addition to finding crappie over 12 inches in length (see figure below), an angler could also catch catfish over 20 inches, and bass over 15 inches. The reservoir's habitat also received a boost this March as crews placed large rootwads for fish habitat near popular bank angling locations. The reservoir is once again ready to provide a quality recreational angling experience! The Springer/Bump Sullivan WHMA is open all year, but is closed to motorized vehicular travel from October 1st through Memorial Day weekend. The reservoir is also closed to fishing from November 1st through the last day in February for waterfowl.



The proportion of Black Crappie in different length categories (1-inch groups) captured during fish sampling efforts at Bump Sullivan Reservoir in June 2018 (black bars) and June 2019 (gray bars).

Diversity of Fishing Opportunities in the Snowy Range

When the mountains are snow-capped it's hard to imagine fishing for rising trout up in the alpine. But when the snow and ice melt it is a great time to find yourself hiking into one of the many high mountain lakes perched in the Snowies. The Snowy Range, between Laramie and Saratoga, is located within the Medicine Bow National Forest and is a very wet ecosystem. Bogs, streams, and lakes are almost more frequent than mosquitos. With so many publically accessible waters, the fishing opportunities are nearly limitless. Brook Trout are most abundant and widely distributed, but other salmonids such as Brown, Cutthroat, Golden, Grayling, Rainbow, and Splake are available to anglers.

Approximately 70 Snowy Range lakes support trout, and most of these fisheries are self-sustaining. Most lakes that support reproducing trout are primarily Brook Trout fisheries, as fall-spawning Brook Trout are able to find adequate spawning and nursery habitat from small inlet and outlet streams, as well as rocky shoals within lakes. When you catch a Cutthroat, Golden, Grayling, Rainbow, or Splake, you've likely caught a stocked fish. Lakes that can be accessed with a truck or ATV receive fish that way. For example, Dipper Lake is stocked with Grayling by ATV and Brooklyn Lake is stocked with Golden and Splake by truck. Other lakes cannot be accessed by vehicles, so they are stocked by helicopters.

Every other July a helicopter arrives in the Snowy Range for a single day to stock around ten lakes. This operation is not cheap or simple, and every detail is planned out to the minute. This same contracted helicopter and pilot also stock remote lakes in other Wyoming mountain ranges such as the Winds and Bighorns. The "ship" arrives the night before the stocking operation, as do the fish, which are reared at various hatcheries around the state. At daybreak and with calm weather, trout are loaded in a custom-built stocking apparatus that has multiple chambers with individual oxygen and pneumatic trap-door openings. Each chamber is loaded with the specific species and quantity for each individual lake. Once loaded, the helicopter departs on a stocking route that is guided by GPS for each lake. The helicopter and stocking chamber hover over a lake, and the pilot releases the fish. Studies have shown that there is little harm to fish being dropped from the air, so fish go on a wild ride as they fall from the sky (usually 50-100 feet) into their new home. The trout need to be stocked at a small size, so it takes several years for them to grow big enough to be caught by anglers.

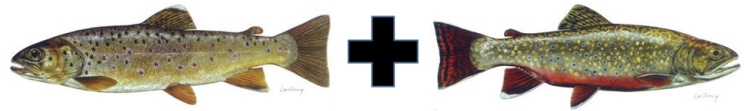
We encourage you to go explore the Snowy Range this summer and seek out a trout or two. Lakes that will be stocked by helicopter include Albany South Twin (Bear River Cutthroat), East Glacier (Bear River Cutthroat), Golden (Golden Trout), Lookout (Bear River Cutthroat), Lost (Bear River Cutthroat), Scott (Golden Trout), Shelf 1&2 (Golden), and South Gap (Bear River Cutthroat and Rainbow). A great resource for learning lake locations and species presence is using a map created by the US Forest Service and Wyoming Game and Fish Department titled "Fishing in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest Snowy Range Area". A PDF can be found on our website at:



https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Fishing/MedicineBow_FishingGuide.pdf

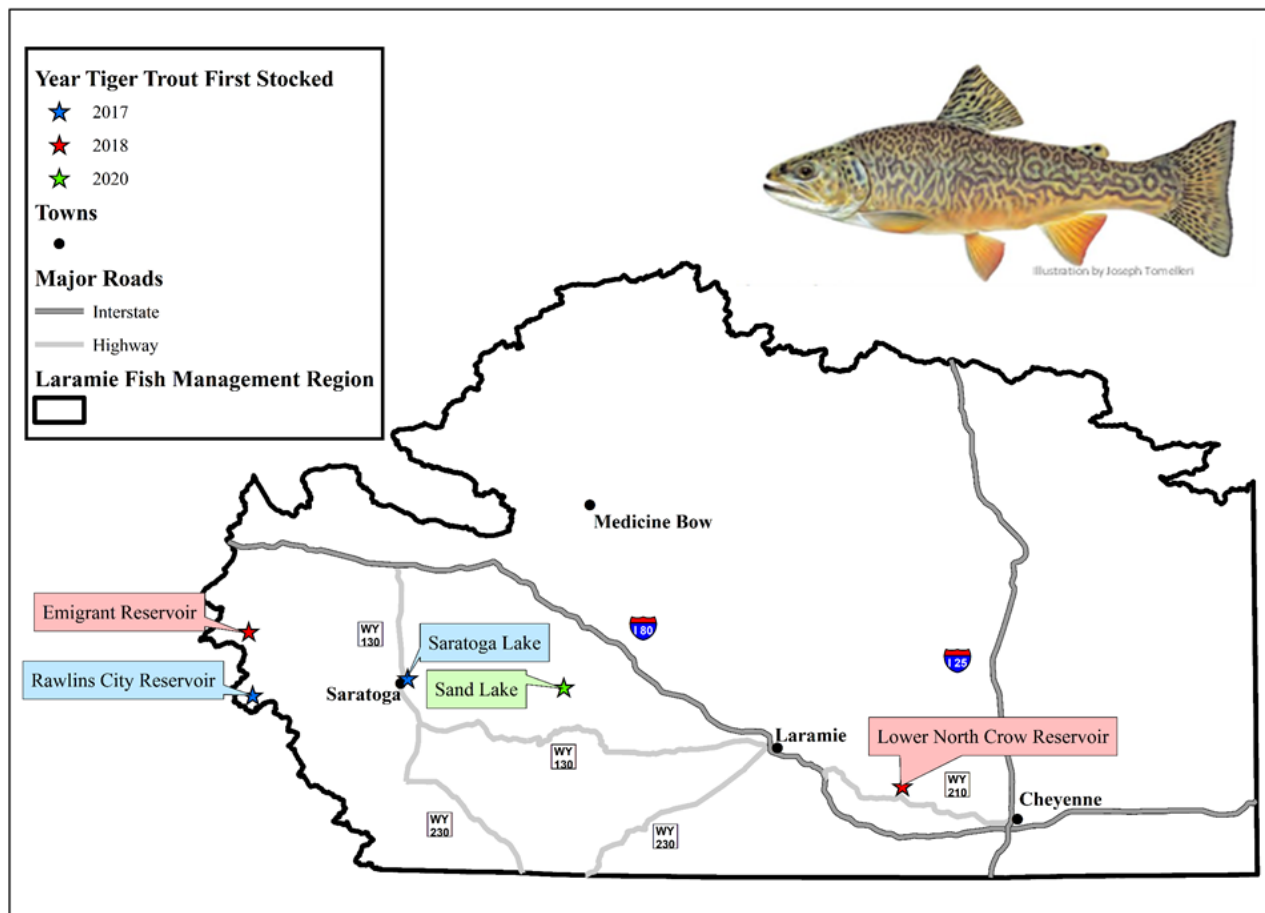
Species Spotlight—Tiger Trout!!!

Tiger Trout are the hybrid offspring created when female Brown Trout eggs are fertilized with the milt from male Brook Trout. Brook Trout and Brown Trout have a different number of chromosomes. The difference in numbers of chromosomes makes hybridization in the wild extremely rare. Hatcheries across the West became very successful at creating sterile Tiger Trout after treating eggs with heat or pressure. The WGFD Story Fish Hatchery started to create Tiger Trout in 2011 and if you are interested in learning more about the process please click [here](#).



The name “Tiger” describes these fish extremely well. They have bold colors and tiger-like patterning called vermiculations, which make them extremely beautiful and desirable to anglers. They are aggressive predators, resulting in a fish that often fights hard and is exciting to catch. The aggressive behavior may allow Tiger Trout to switch to “piscivory”, or a fish-dominated diet, at a relatively small size. The switch to feeding on fish can result in quick growth rates and large-sized fish.

There are many desirable attributes of these fish to anglers, and so Laramie Region Fisheries Biologists started stocking Tiger Trout in waters throughout the region to diversify fisheries and provide this unique opportunity. Tiger Trout are consistently stocked in five waters throughout the Laramie Region (see below). All five of these waters were stocked with Tiger Trout for the first time in 2017 or thereafter. Tiger Trout stocked in Saratoga Lake and Rawlins City Reservoir may be reaching large sizes after 3 years of growth. Tiger Trout are a great species to start targeting in the Laramie Region in 2020.



Laramie Region Aquatic Invasive Species News

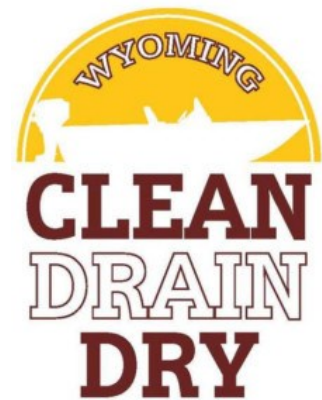
Curly-leaf Pondweed in Wheatland #3

Curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) was discovered in Wheatland #3 in 2019. The plant was first in Wyoming waters in 2011 at Lake DeSmet and has since spread to a few other locations across the state. Curly-leaf pondweed has wavy, lasagna-like leaves that are a half-inch wide and up to three inches long. It generally grows from the shore to depths of fifteen feet creating large surface mats that can inhibit recreation such as boating and fishing. The species is native to Eurasia, Africa and Australia and introduced to the United States in the mid 1800's. Curly-leaf pondweed can spread via plant fragments that are attached to boats and equipment that are not properly cleaned before using them again. If you are using curly-leaf pondweed infested waters please remember to:

Clean all equipment and gear of plants, mud and debris. *Never move a plant or animal from one location to another.*

Drain all water from your gear and equipment. This includes all types of watercraft, waders, boots, clothing, buckets – anything that comes into contact with the water.

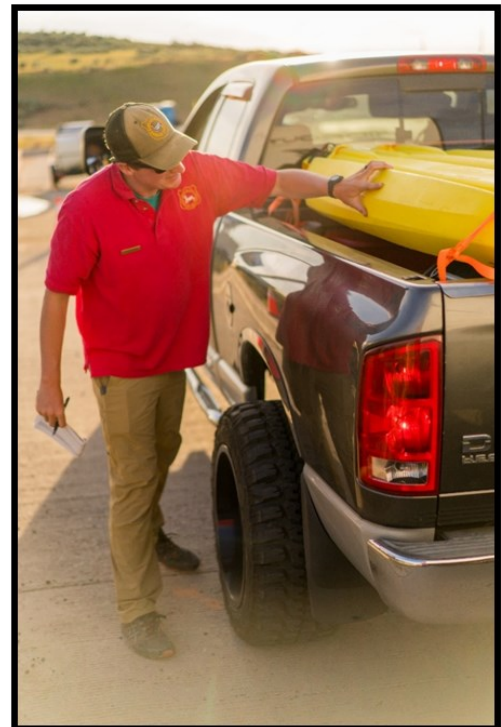
Dry everything thoroughly. In Wyoming we recommend drying for 5 days in the summer, 18 days in the spring or fall, or 3 days at freezing temperatures.



Monitoring for AIS

Monitoring was conducted on eight flowing waters and 19 standing waters in 2019 within the Laramie Region. Plankton tows and water quality surveys were conducted to detect larval (veliger) mussels and to determine temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, water clarity, calcium and hardness. In addition, shoreline surveys were conducted to detect juvenile and adult mussels, crayfish, clams, snails, and aquatic plants.

No zebra or quagga mussels were detected by plankton tow monitoring or shoreline surveys in 2019 within the Laramie Region. Asian Clams reside in the North Platte River below Guernsey Reservoir, Guernsey Reservoir, and Horse Creek. Asian Clams were discovered during 2019 sampling events further upstream in Horse Creek than previously recorded. Historic populations of Brook Stickleback in Rock Creek, Threemile Creek, Spring Creek (Little Med Bow tributary), Cow Creek, East Allen Lake, and Johnson Creek Pond were confirmed again with sampling in 2019.



Become a Master Angler

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is pleased to provide a program that recognizes the catch of trophy sized fish from our phenomenal Wyoming waters. There are three levels of achievement; Master Angler, Trophy Angler and Ultimate Angler.

As of April 1, 2020 here are the **TOP FIVE WATERS** in the Laramie Fish Management Region in terms of number of Master Angler awards: Hawk Springs Reservoir, Twin Buttes Reservoir, Wheatland Reservoir #3, Grayrocks Reservoir, and Lake Hattie.

RULES

- Open to all Wyoming anglers, Resident and Nonresident.
- Fish must be caught with legal methods and during open seasons in Wyoming.
- Entries must be for fish captured after June 1, 2019.
- Anglers are limited to one Master Angler entry per species per calendar year. Submissions for Trophy Angler and Ultimate Angler have no time limitations.
- Each entry must be accompanied by one side-view photograph, preferably with either the angler or another object (e.g. ruler) that can be used to validate length.



- Qualifying fish must meet or exceed the minimum length established for that species. Length is defined as the Total Length of the fish (nearest 1/2 inch); from the snout to the tip of the pinched tail.

MASTER REWARDS

The only way to win is to fish, so get out there!

When you catch a [qualifying fish](#), you will be awarded a Master Angler decal sticker of that fish species.

Catch five different species of master angler qualifying fish, and you'll earn the Trophy Angler Award challenge coin.

If you catch ten different species of master angler size, you will earn the Ultimate Angler award comprised of a special prize package and statewide recognition.



Habitat and Fisheries: The Encampment River Campground Conversion

Wyoming streams are described by the quality of trout fishing they provide, which is based on the pounds of trout per mile of stream. The two best Wyoming Trout Stream Category rankings are BLUE (≥ 600 pounds per mile) and RED (≥ 300 pounds per mile). The Encampment River flows for about 31 miles from the Colorado-Wyoming state line until it converges with the North Platte River. It is an extremely productive stream and offers great trout fishing based on BLUE and RED sections. Even though most of the Encampment River meets the desired objectives, there are certain sections that historically failed to meet the established benchmarks.

One section of the Encampment River that continually produced less trout than desired is located near the BLM Encampment River Campground (also known as Oddfellows), which is about 1.5 miles south of the Town of Encampment. The lack of deep pool habitat and cover for adult trout were due to the legacy effects of historic tie drives and mining at this site. To address these concerns, a habitat enhancement project was completed at this site in 2016. In general, the low flow channel was narrowed and deepened for 1,600 ft of stream, and structures constructed of boulder clusters and woody debris were added throughout the reach (see below photos).



Above photos are before (left) and after (right) photos of the Encampment River habitat enhancement project.

An important component of habitat projects is follow-up monitoring. Therefore, on July 31, 2019, Laramie Fisheries Biologists sampled the Encampment River near the Encampment River Campground to evaluate the response of the fishery to the habitat enhancement work completed in 2016. Overall, the abundance of trout remained similar and unchanged three years after construction. Brown Trout were still the most common species collected, and Rainbow Trout were still present in low numbers. However, even though the abundance of trout remained similar, the trout population did change to one composed of more large-sized fish (≥ 14 inches). For example, the average size of trout increased from 8.4 inches to 10.3 inches and the largest sized trout increased from 15.9 inches to 17.4 inches in length. The increased size of trout and corresponding increase in biomass likely resulted in the population meeting the objective to support at least 300 pounds of trout per mile, or a Wyoming Trout Stream Category ranking RED, for the first time!



Treasure Island Public Access Area Improvements



The boat ramp at the Treasure Island Public Access Area (PAA) south of Saratoga is one of the busiest boating access points on the North Platte River. The popularity of the ramp can lead to safety hazards as it is often congested during the busy summer floating season. The ramp can also be hard to see as boaters float down the river towards it. Additionally, the ramp is subject to significant variations in water flow depth. When water levels are low, boaters must drive into the river channel and over a gravel bar before they reach adequate depths to launch their boats. At high flow, boaters may have to back paddle for some time if the ramp is congested.

In addition to the boat ramp, the parking lot at the Treasure Island PAA is unorganized and inefficient. During heavy use periods the parking lot is undersized for the demand (see picture to the right). One vehicle/trailer combination parked haphazardly can disrupt the entire parking scheme on a busy day.

WGFD is working with an engineering firm to improve safety at the boat ramp, enhance river conditions for floaters, and create better organization of the parking lot. Design efforts are currently underway and will continue throughout



2020. Updates to the PAA may include changes to the boat ramp location, river manipulations to improve water flow and sediment movement, and a new parking lot organization scheme. In 2020, WGFD will begin seeking implementation funds and necessary permits. The earliest improvements will be constructed at Treasure Island PAA are in 2021, pending necessary funds and permits. During construction, the access area will be closed to the public for safety reasons while heavy equipment is on site. It is expected that river and boat ramp improvements will occur from August through October 2021. WGFD will alert the public of closures at this PAA as the construction timeline is developed.



**Wyoming Game and
Fish Department**
Conserving Wildlife-Serving
People

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2020 Laramie Region Walk-In Fishing Access Areas

Walk-in Fishing Area numbers correspond to Walk-in fishing map [click here](#)

North Platte River Drainage Walk-in Fishing Areas

- 18 - Medicine Bow River (Brook, Brown, Rainbow)
- 19 - Laramie River (Brown)
- 20 - Little Medicine Bow River (Brook)
- 22 - Bear Creek (Brook)
- 23 - Moriah Ranch Reservoir and Duck Creek Reservoir (Brook, Rainbow)
- 24 - Sodergreen Lake (Brown, Cutthroat, Rainbow)

South Platte River Drainage Walk-in Fishing Areas

- 1 - South Fork Middle Crow Creek (Brook, Brown)
- 2 - Johnson Creek Pond (Brook)

We welcome all questions and comments on this newsletter or about the fisheries resources within the Laramie Region. Please feel free to contact us or send an email to:

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